

Traffic Signals

#0043

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—October 5, 1979

This evening, I want to talk with you about traffic signals. You know what they are. You are driving along and suddenly there's a red light. What do you do? You put your foot on the brake, and you hope it'll turn green fast.

Sometimes we come up to an intersection, and we have a blinking red light. What does that tell us? Stop, and then look, and then go ahead if it's clear. Is that right? Sometimes there's a red light, and there's a sign that indicates that after you've stopped, if everything's clear, you can go ahead and turn to the right, but not go ahead until it changes.

All those lights have real significance as they apply to our Christian life. I'd like to take a lesson from the book of Exodus the fourteenth chapter:

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" Romans 15:4.

So we'll see some of these traffic signals here in the Scripture narrative, and see how they'll help us to go on our pilgrim way today.

The fourteenth of Exodus deals with the marvelous experience at the Red Sea. Israel, after many years of slavery in Egypt, were on their way, over two million people, men, women, and children, making their way out of the land of Goshen out into the desert. As they traveled, something appeared that they had never seen before, a great cloudy mass overhead to shield them from the rays of the sun that turned at night to a pillar of fire, giving light to their encampment. Wasn't that a marvelous dispensation of the Lord?

[Audience] Amen

They noticed that this cloud was leading on. It didn't just stay in a certain place, it kept going. They were instructed by Moses that God was in that cloud, that He was leading them in the path that they should go. So they were following the guidance of Jesus in the cloud.

Then a strange thing happened. The cloud which had been going eastward turned southwestward. They wondered why it would change directions like that. God had a purpose. Finally, following that cloud, they were led around to where the came to the Red Sea at a place where it could not be passed over by any means they had, and they encamped there beside the sea.

But just about the time that they neared the Red Sea, they saw coming after them the great army of Egypt. Pharaoh, with his chariots of war and his armed soldiers, was on the march to get them back as slaves. God—don't miss this—had deliberately led them by that pillar of cloud forward and then around in the way that led them into what the Egyptians thought was a trap, and the Israelites thought it was a trap. They had a large mountain on the right, a desert mountain on the left, the Red Sea in front, and the Egyptians behind.

As the Egyptian army came up, night was falling. The Egyptians thought, "Well, we have them boxed in. We'll take care of them in the morning." You can imagine the conditions in the camp of Israel as those multitudes of people felt they were just like sheep for the slaughter, or else to be captured and carried back into slavery. They were in panic. They complained and murmured.

But now notice what Moses said in the 13th verse:

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still" Exodus 14:13.

What was the light? Red light. Just stand still.

Now it's hard to stand still when everyone around seems in panic, but that was the direction: "Stand still."

"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" Exodus 14:13–14.

So under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, Moses sought to calm that *great* host. As they learned the lessons of faith, for surely it took special faith to stand still under those conditions, to be at peace when panic was the natural thing. Now notice the next direction:

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" Exodus 14:15.

The light had turned to what? Green. The light had turned to green. Two times now, they had learned the lesson of faith to be still, to be quiet, to stop and wait on God. Now that same faith must find expression in moving, but moving in what direction? Forward. What was forward? The Red Sea. That's all—mountains on either side, the Egyptians behind.

"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea" Exodus 14:15–16.

Did it work? Yes. Thank God. The same God that said, “Go forward,” that same God, in answer to the prayer and command of Moses with his rod, opened up a path through those billows, and the children of Israel started marching guided by the light of that pillar of cloud.

To the Egyptians, it was a cloud of darkness on their side, but to Israel, it was a pillar of light. So the hosts of Israel started marching, marching, marching through that way that God had opened. But suddenly, the Egyptians became alarmed. They heard the movements of Israel. They sensed that something was happening, and through some way that they could not understand it seemed that Israel was getting away from them. So they decided that they would go after them.

You remember that Paul, in Hebrews 11, says,

“By faith...

The children of Israel.

“...passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned” Hebrews 11:29.

What does “assaying to” mean? Try to do. They thought they could do it. But they didn’t realize that the light had turned red for them. Did you ever see somebody try to make a traffic light that the man ahead of him had made? Yes. You can get into an accident that way. The Egyptians got into a terrible accident that way.

They thought, “If Israel can go ahead, we can too.” But you know what happened. God fought against them. Their chariots wheels sank in that wet Red Sea sand, and God turned that pillar of cloud and fire into a thunderbolt, lightning flashed and the thunders rolled. They realized that God was fighting against them. Finally, they saw Israel safe on the other shore. Then God said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea and let it come together again and destroy the hosts of Egypt.” So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord.

The Egyptians didn’t understand how to follow the traffic light. They went through by presumption. Now I want to tell you something, friends: faith is not a matter of going ahead or of stopping, it depends on what the light is. If it’s red, faith says, “I will stop.” If it’s green, faith says, “I will go ahead.” The children of Israel had the red light first to stop. Did they do it? Did they stand still and learn to wait in faith? Yes. Thank God. Then they had the green light to go ahead, and they did.

Now, I don’t know what you think took the greater amount of faith, but I say it took tremendous faith to do either one of those things. To stand still in patience and peace when the hosts of Egypt were there just waiting to kill or capture all of them, that took real trust in God. Didn’t it?

But to move forward in the direction of the sea, and God didn't all in one second when He told them that open up the way, He let them march right down to the water's edge and then He opened it up. So He often does with us.

Notice this statement in *Patriarchs and Prophets*:

“Often, the Christian life is beset by dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before and bondage or death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, ‘Go forward.’ We should obey this command, even though our eyes cannot penetrate the darkness, and we feel the cold waves about our feet. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit. Those who defer obedience till every shadow of uncertainty disappears and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey at all. Unbelief whispers, ‘Let us wait till the obstructions are removed, and we can see our way clearly;’ but faith courageously urges an advance, hoping all things, believing all things” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 290.

So faith can venture all on the promise and the command of God. But on the other hand, to forge ahead, to jump ahead, to run ahead without that command or promise of God, that's presumption. What Israel learned first was to wait, so before we learn to run ahead, we must learn to wait.

When should we wait?

“If perplexed, hold still; make no move in the dark”
Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5, page 572.

I want you to read it with me:

If perplexed, hold still; make no move in the dark” *Ibid.*

Again:

If perplexed, hold still; make no move in the dark” *Ibid.*

As a friend of mine used to put it, “If you don't know what to do, then you know just what to do.” That is, pray and wait on God. Is that right? Yes. God may ask us to *wait* in the dark; He does not ask us to *leap* in the dark. That's not faith, that's foolishness—plain folly. People are doing it every day—taking chances and taking risks. Sometimes they call it faith: it's rank presumption.

Faith is not doing what I think, or what I want, faith is doing what God says. Did the children of Israel have the command of God to wait there at the Red Sea? Yes. Then did they have the command of God through Moses, “Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward”? Yes. In each case, *obedience*

demonstrated their faith. Faith is manifest, not in doing what we desire, but in doing what God says. Faith involves then *surrender* to our Heavenly Father, not just thinking something or hoping something, but accepting what God says and doing it.

So if in doubt, “if perplexed, hold still; make no move in the dark.” Wait and God will help you.

“Be patient and the clear light will appear” *Ibid*.

Now some people attach a great deal of importance to some hunch they get, some impression. But notice what the next sentence says:

“If you yield to impressions you will lose your soul, and the soul is of great value with God” *Ibid*.

The Egyptians had quite a hunch, quite an impression that if they would go in there after Israel, they would get them. All they got was a drowning. So presumption is often fostered by listening to impression.

Somebody says, “Brother Frazee, don’t you believe the Lord gives impressions?” Yes, I do. But I also believe the Devil gives impressions. I know he does. Besides that, there are just impressions that we get from other people or from our own minds, just human ideas. So everything in the way of impression should be brought to the test of the law and the testimony. The only thing that’s infallible is God’s Word, and thank God for the Bible. What do you say?

So we’re to learn patience in waiting, and learn to push in going ahead. Here is a wonderful statement that I want to share with you that was written to the president of the General Conference, Elder O. A. Olson, back in 1892:

“Now, do not worry at all about the future. Do your best without overdoing, and go forward hopeful and courageous in God and saying He careth for us. Whatever burdens lay heavily, cast them on the Lord. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. At times it will seem that you cannot take another step, well, ‘wait and know that I am God.’”

Now notice in these few lines, we have the expression “go forward,” and we also have the expression “wait and know that I am God.” These expressions, of course, are taken from the Bible, some of which we’ve read tonight.

You remember the 46th Psalm, that battle hymn of the remnant as they go into earth’s last conflict.

“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth” Psalm 46:10.

In Volume 5, page 215, is this beautiful and encouraging statement.

“Oh, for a living, active faith! We need it; we must have it, or we shall faint and fail in the day of trial. The darkness that will then rest upon our path must not discourage us or drive us to despair. It is the veil with which God covers His glory when He comes to impart rich blessings. We should know this by our past experience” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5*, page 215.

That little time of darkness and fear when Israel came to the edge of the Red Sea was but the prelude to one of the most marvelous manifestations that the people of God have ever witnessed. Think of it! A whole nation passing through the sea as by dry land while their enemies, every one, were destroyed.

But what was the prelude to it? That experience of fear, of concern, of perplexity, of darkness when God had to say to them, “Be still. Wait. Just be still and wait.” Then the light turned green, and they went ahead.

“At times it will seem that you cannot take another step, well, ‘wait and know that I am God.’” (Statement made by the president of the General Conference, Elder O. A. Olson, in 1892.)

In the providence of God, I came across a very interesting article in the *Review and Herald* of December 29, 1910. There are a few statements here that I don’t know of anywhere else where they are quite as plain and clear as they are on this page, so I share them with you:

“Into the daily life there come many perplexing problems that we cannot solve” *Review and Herald*, December 29, 1910.

Do you know anything about them? Somebody says, “Yes, and I’ve been praying so hard that God would solve all my problems.” Now notice how He works.

“Into the daily life there come many perplexing problems that we cannot solve. There are those who wish to adjust every difficulty, and to settle every question before they begin to work. Such will surely fail. In the end, the future will be just as indistinct, and the problems just as perplexing, as when they began to speculate about them. It is in following light given that we receive greater light” *Ibid.*

Tell me, we were talking about traffic signals, suppose you are going along a street where you can look up the avenue and see the traffic lights—one—two—three—four, block after block. Suppose they’re all red. Suppose this first one which is just in front of us now turns green, but the others are still red, what shall we do? What would you do?

Shall we wait till they all turn green clear on up? Wouldn't that be the wise thing to do, the safe thing to do? Interestingly enough, we don't do that when we're driving automobiles, but that's the way some people want to do it in the Christian life. They want to see the whole thing green straight through! They want to have the lights clear all the way through.

But God doesn't always work that way. That's what I'm reading here.

"It is in following light given that we receive greater light. Those who go forward in faith will find the solution of the problems that perplex them... God will go before them, giving them skill and understanding to do that which needs to be done" *Ibid.*

So if there are ten things that I am perplexed about, and only one of them that I get light on, what had I better do? Start moving in that direction.

"Questions will arise that cannot be settled by any amount of thinking. Do not spend time trying to settle them. Take up the work waiting to be done, trusting in God. His righteousness will go before you, and the questions that have troubled you will answer themselves" *Ibid.*

Have you noticed in well-regulated cities that often as you move along at the prescribed speed into the first green light by the time you get to the next one, it has turned what? Green. And then you go on to the next one, and it has turned? Green.

Friends, let's learn to move with God that way. What do you say? If one light is green, let's move in. But if somehow or another God allows the next light to stay on red a while, what'll we do? Wait.

"Be still, and know that I am God" "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart"
Psalm 46:10; 27:14.

It's a wonderful thing to have such faith in God's wisdom that we know that He knows when to turn the light, and to have such love for Him that all we want is to carry out His plan. This is the faith of Jesus. This is what Jesus demonstrated in His life here on earth. He came down from Heaven not to do His own will, but the Father's will. And again and again, He made it clear that He was seeking to please His Father.

The great test of it came in the garden of Gethsemane. There, dear friends, everything looked black and dark. But He waited on God. He waited there in the darkness and shadows of Gethsemane pleading with God for light, and strength, and help to do what His Father wanted Him to do. Finally, the light was green to go on to Calvary. It was a bloody road, a cruel road. But He went with faith and trust. He

who had waited in the shadows in the garden, and wrestled in prayer in faith, and surrender, bore the heavy cross, and died as a sacrifice for our sins.

I'm so glad that He has invited us to take the light end of the burden. He takes the heavy end. He bore the cross that we might not have to suffer the guilt of our sins and the punishment for them. But we do learn obedience by the things that we suffer as He did, which means, friends, that we learn faith by having to wait when we wish we could go ahead, and needing to go ahead when we wish that we might wait. To put our will in the hand of Jesus, to watch for His guidance, this is the way that God wants us to go.

Now a very practical point. There are many things, of course, in the Bible that are plain. Anyone who is anxious to know the will of God can find out. But there are other things in the daily life that there is nothing we can read in the Bible that will tell us.

The Bible won't tell you exactly when to get up in the morning, exactly what to have for breakfast, exactly what dress or suit of clothes to put on. There are a thousand details of daily life that must be settled by the individual. If we are anxious to please our heavenly Father, and are watching for the signals of His providence and the impressions of His Spirit, we can know that we please Him, dear friends.

And so I tell people this very simple thing: Do you want to please Him? Then after prayer and study do what you think will please Him. That will please Him. So wait at the traffic intersection until to you the light is green. Then go forward and God will bless.

[Testimony service]

Copyright 2021. All rights reserved.

W. D. Frazee Sermons
435 Lifestyle Lane, Wildwood, GA 30757
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755
www.WDFsermons.org
support@WDFsermons.org